

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 KABUL 03890 141325Z
ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
TRSE-00 OMB-01 ACDA-12 OC-06 CCO-00 OTPE-00 EB-08
FCC-01 COME-00 BIB-01 /094 W
-----101332 141344Z /72

R 140929Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY KABUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7984
INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L KABUL 3890

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, PINR, AF
SUBJECT: THE NEW AFGHAN CABINET: MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS,
MAJOR MOHAMMAD ASLAM WATANJAR

1. MY FIRST CALL ON DEPTY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF
COMMUNICATIONS, MAJOR MOHAMMAD ASLAM WATANJAR, ON MAY 13,
WENT SMOOTHLY AND CORDIALLY. WATANJAR RECEIVED ME AND ECON/COMM
COUNSELOR IN THE COMPANY OF DEPUTY MINISRER MOHAMMAD ZARIF,
WHO ACTED AS INTERPRETER. MINISTER HIMSELF KNOWS ONLY A FEW
WORDS OF ENGLISH; TO JUDGE FROM OUR CONVERSATIO, HE PREFERS
PUSHTUN TO DARI -- AT LEAST THAT WAS WHAT HE AND ZARIF USED
BETWEEN THEMSELVES.

2. A HANDSOME, SLIGHT YOUNG MAN OF 31 OR 32, WATANJAR WAS WELL,
SOMBERLY, DRESSED IN WHAT APPEARED TO BE A MODIFIED NAVY BLUE
TANKERS UNIFORM, WITH NO INSIGNIA OR MILITARY ADORNMENT. LIKE
BABRAK, HE WORE NO TIE. BY CONTRAST, ZARIF, A KABUL UNIVERSITY
PROFESSOR WHO, INTER ALIA, IS IN CHARGE OF THE SEISMIC
STATION HERE, WAS IN WESTERN GARB, SPORT COAT AND TIE. WATANJAR
IS SOFT SPOKEN -- AT TIME ALMOST SHY "" AND HE AND ZARIF, BOTH
OF WHOM ARE FROM WESTERN PAKTIA PROVINCE, SEEMED TO HAVE AN
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 KABUL 03890 141325Z

EASY, RELAXED RELATIONSHIP.

3. THE FOURTH OF FIVE BROTHERS, AND THE "ONLY ONE EDUCATED,
THE OTHERS ARE ALL PEASANTS," WATANJAR IS A PROFESSIONAL ARMY
OFFICER. GRADUATING FROM THE AFGHAN MILITARY ACADEMY IN 1347
(1968), HE SPECIALIZED IN ARMOR AND, AT THE TIME OF THE COUP,
WAS SERVING WITH THE FOURTH ARMORED BRIGADE AT PUL-I-CHARKI,

REPORTEDLY AS ACTING DEPUTY COMMANDER. I ATTEMPTED TO DRAW HIM OUT ON THIS POINT, ASKING IF HE HAD BEEN IN A POSITION OF COMMAND. HIS ANSWER WAS THAT HE HAD COMMANDED THE BRIGADE IN THE COUP, A POSITION, HE SAID, THAT HAD BEEN "GIVEN (ENTRUSTED) TO MY BY MY FRIENDS." HE HAD BEEN ABLE TO SUCCEED IN THE JOB, HE ADDED BECAUSE OF THE DISCIPLINE HE HAD LEARNED IN THE "HARD SCHOOL OF THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY." WATANJAR SIAD HE HAD ONLY BEEN ABROAD ONCE, WITH A BRIEF MILITARY MISSION TO INDIA EARLIER THIS YEAR. HE IS MARRIED, WITH TWO DAUGHTERS AND A SON.

4. DURING AN EXCHANGE OF PLEASANTRIES ABOUT THE JOYS OF HORSEBACK RIDING, WATANJAR JOKINGLY REMARKED THAT HE UNDERSTOOD THE PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT HAD "LOST ME" ON ONE OF MY RECENT RIPS. I ASSURED HIM THAT I WAS NOT LOST BUT MERELY DOING WITHOUT MY OMNIPRESENT POLICE ESCORT FOR A FEW HOURS. ZARIF ADDED THAT THEY HAD FOUND A RECORD OF THE INCIDENT IN DAOUD'S FILES BUT HAD ALREADY HEARD OF IT FROM "FRIENDS" WHO HAD BEEN WORKING IN THE FORMER PRESIDENT'S OFFICE BEFORE THE COUP.

5. I PUT IN A PLUG FOR AMERICAN EXPERTISE IN THE COMMUNICATIONS FIELD, REMINDED THE NEW MINISTER OF THE VISIT IN APRIL BY INTELSAT VICE PRESIDENT WOOD, AND STRESSED OUR FIRMS STOOD READY TO MAKE OFFERS FOR EQUIPMENT AND SERVICES. AS EXPECTED, HE REPLIED THAT HIS MINISTRY WAS STUDYING A WIDE VARIETY OF COMMUNICATIONS PROJECTS AND WOULD BE IN TOUCH WITH US AS SOON AS DECISIONS HAD BEEN TAKEN.
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 KABUL 03890 141325Z

6. COMMENT: WATANJAR OBVIOUSLY KNOWS LITTLE ABOUT COMMUNICATIONS (E. G. , HE HAD TO ASK ZARIF WHAT A MICROWAVE RELAY SYSTEM WAS). IT IS EQUALLY APPARENT, HOWEVER, THAT HE IS IN CHARGE OF HIS MINISTRY AND IS THERE TO GIVE POLICY GUIDANCE, NOT TO ANALYZE CIRCUITS OR INSTALL TELEPHONES.

7. THE SAUDI AMBASSADOR, WHO SAW WATANJAR LATER THE SAME DAY, TOLD ME THAT HE BELIEVES WATANJAR IS A DEVOUT MOSLEM. HE, TOO, WAS IMPRESSED WITH WATANJAR'S APPARENT SUBSERVIENCE TO THE CIVILIAN PARTY LEADERSHIP. THE FIRST PORTRAIT OF TARAKI I HAVE SEEN WAS HUNG IN WATANJAR'S OFFICE.
ELIOT

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CABINET, TELECOMMUNICATION, PERSONNEL APPOINTMENTS, MINISTERS (DIPLOMATS)
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 14 may 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978KABUL03890
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780204-0842
Format: TEL
From: KABUL
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780560/aaaabzdn.tel
Line Count: 107
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: b9a21c9f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: ONLY
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: ONLY
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 20 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2697560
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: THE NEW AFGHAN CABINET: MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS, MAJOR MOHAMMAD ASLAM WATANJAR
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, PINR, AF, (WATANJAR, MOHAMMAD ASLAM)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/b9a21c9f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014